



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS COSTIN

September 15, 2006
Nahant, Massachusetts

Interviewer

Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS COSTIN

September 15, 2006

Knott: Thank you again, Mr. Costin, for agreeing to do this and inviting us to your beautiful home. Perhaps the best place to start would be if you could tell us how you first got into politics and, in particular, how you first came to know John F. Kennedy and the Kennedy family.

Costin: The way I met John Kennedy was, in 1944 I graduated from high school in Lynn and went off, at age 17, in the Marine Corps. I spent two years in the Marines, from 1944 to 1946. I was discharged in August of '46, and it was too late for me to get in up at B.C. [Boston College], where I wanted to go. So I went to Northeastern nights. I started in late August.

In early September they were having the primary elections in Massachusetts. John Kennedy was running as one of eleven candidates for the primary to be the Congressman from the district that represented the North End of Boston, Cambridge, Watertown, and the like. While I was waiting for a bus to go home one night, there was a rally in the North End. I walked over instead of getting the bus I should have taken. I heard Jack Kennedy speak, and when he came off the platform, I just introduced myself, shook hands with him. When he got elected, I sent him a little congratulations letter.

The next year, I was a freshman at Boston College. And at the age of 21, I was elected to the Lynn City Council. I got a handwritten note from Jack Kennedy, because the news was all over the paper. I was the youngest person ever elected. So that's how our relationship started. Then I saw him a year later, when I represented the city at a state convention for the AMVETS [American Veterans] organization, which was a group of veterans who had the organization at the state convention, which was down in New Bedford. I was there because I wanted them to come to Lynn the following year, and so we both were on the speaking program. So we sat together, and we started up our conversations again.

Then I didn't hear anything from him until 1950. I had just gotten married, and we had built a brand new home right next to my father's house, where I grew up. My wife was a schoolteacher. She had graduated a couple of years before from college, and then she was a schoolteacher and putting me through Boston College with my veterans' money.

So I got a call from Jack Kennedy, who wanted to see me. I went up to his apartment on Bowdoin Street, and Frank Morrissey let me in. Frank Morrissey was the driver for the father and later became the driver for Jack and later became a judge. He said, "We're going to have to

go into the bathroom. The Congressman's back is bothering him, so he's soaking in the tub." So I walk into the bathroom, put down the seat of the hopper, sat on the hopper, and Jack was in there having his back soaked.

He said, "Tom, the reason why I wanted to see you is that we're trying to get Paul Dever—" who was the Governor—"to declare whether he's going to run for re-election as Governor or run for the U.S. Senate seat. He's saying he's going to run for the Senate seat against [Henry Cabot] Lodge and step down as Governor. So we're trying to have him decide first before I make a move, but I can't wait too long. So I've got to get out in the hinterland to meet people. Could you have a house party for me?" I said, "Sure, we can set one up."

So we invited 100 people to the house a couple of months later, and I got a call from Frank Morrissey the morning that he was supposed to come. Frank said, "Tom, when the Congressman comes down, he's not feeling well. He's got a relapse of malaria, so he won't be able to stay long." So he came down, and we sat him in a chair. The 100 people stood around, sat around. We had some food and so forth, and he talked about his trip to Southeast Asia—he had just come back, and he talked about that—and then he talked about what he thought should be happening and what wasn't happening and some things that should be happening in Massachusetts. Then he said that he was looking for their support when he ran for the Senate seat.

Now, as a personal note, it just so happens that my wife's uncle, who had been mayor of Lynn—his name was Albert Cole, Republican; was also a State Senator in 1934 up to 1940—and he rode on the train every day with Cabot Lodge, who was also in the State Senate, into Boston. He was Henry Cabot Lodge's campaign manager for reelection to the U.S. Senate. So it was one of those situations where I think I helped Jack Kennedy because I got a Republican wife to turn into a Democratic voter. This was the beginning of my real working with Jack Kennedy, because we set up parties in Lynn, and Jack's mother came down to several of them. We had them at the New Ocean House, and my wife became very involved in the campaigns and so forth. So this went on all across the state, and then he was elected.

I was elected, at age 29, the youngest mayor ever elected in the city of Lynn, in 1955. In 1956 I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. We went out there, and at the time, there were about 12 of us who were known as the "Irish Mafia." We would meet with Jack Kennedy every morning at the convention, and we put together what we thought was a fairly good campaign to have his name come before the convention to be the Vice Presidential nominee of the Democratic Party.

We were staying at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago, and right across the street was a big department store. They were selling ties, plain ties, for a dollar. I got a wild idea, went into the store and bought 200 ties and had the people in the sewing department upstairs, who were putting on a demonstration, to sew in the name "Kennedy" and "VP" on the ties with different colors, to have them stand out. So when they were done a couple of days later, I and a few others went around to the delegations that we were trying to get interested in Kennedy and just passed out the ties. Well, I passed them out to the 12 Irish Mafia guys, and when he came to breakfast that morning, John Kennedy said, "That's fabulous, where did you get those?" I told him the story and he said, "What did you do with them?" I said, "We passed them out." "Passed them

out?” he said. “Why didn’t you sell them and get money for the campaign?” Kennedy was also focused.

This convention in Chicago put Jack Kennedy in the real workings of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, and I’ll tell you why: the members of the Democratic state committee were anti-Kennedy. They were made up of people who had been associated with John McCormack, with Paul Dever, and with other people who were very upset that Jack Kennedy came back from the wars and moved out a lot of the old pols who were looking to run for Congress in his district. So they were not for Jack Kennedy. They thought he had bought the election.

Each morning we would have a breakfast hosted by one state from the New England delegation. When it came time for Massachusetts’ turn—the speaker would be the highest officeholder in the Democratic Party from the host state—so when it came time for Massachusetts, John Kennedy, being the junior Senator from the state, was the highest elected official, so he was the speaker. It just so happened, one of the members of the delegation was James Michael Curley, the former mayor of Boston, who had been defeated by Jack Kennedy’s grandfather for not only the mayor’s seat but also for Congress. He was one of the members of the Massachusetts delegation.

Now, Curley had a fellow that they called “Up-Up” McCarty, and Up-Up McCarty’s job was to precede Curley anyplace he went and say, if people were sitting down, “Up, up, the Governor’s coming. Up, Governor Curley is here.” Right in the middle of John Kennedy’s speech, the back door of the room where we were meeting opened up, and walking right down the center there was Up-Up McCarty, right in front of James Michael Curley. He walked right up in front and sat to the right of the head table, looking at Jack Kennedy.

The people from the other delegations didn’t know what to do. Some stood up clapping, and some sat down. Some laid their heads in their hand, like us Irish Mafia boys, who were so upset. John Kennedy just cut his speech short. We didn’t wait until the next morning to have a meeting. He called a meeting of the Irish Mafia and said, “We’re going back to Boston, and we’re going to take over the Democratic Party. If I’m going anywhere, I’ve got to have my own people in the state Democratic committee.”

There was a fellow called [William] “Onions” Burke, who came from Hatfield, Massachusetts—a very wealthy guy that John McCormack had put in as the head of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts. He was a very strong supporter of John McCormack. So this was a fellow that we had to unseat.

What John Kennedy did, when he came back from that convention—oh, the other thing that really upset him was that when it came time for the nomination speech for Vice President, we had it all set up. We had signs printed, and the whole delegation was supposed to stand up and march down to get other delegations to follow and start a rally for Jack Kennedy. When the time came, it ended up having about 20 people from the Massachusetts delegation, and everybody else sat on their hands. And so these two instances of Up-Up McCarty and sitting on their hands got John Kennedy to say, “Hey, we’re going to take over the party.”

When the Senator came back to Massachusetts, he went around to every city and town and met with the Democratic city committeewomen and Democratic city committeemen to get them to vote for his candidate for state committee chairman. When it came to Lynn's turn, he came to me. I brought my two people in, and it just so happens that the woman who was the female delegate was Mary Kennedy, but she was no relation. She was with him right from the very beginning. The other fellow was George O'Shea, who was head of the sanitation department in Lynn, a fellow that when I was on the city council, I saved his—can I use the word?—

Knott: Please do.

Costin: —shoulder so many times before the city council. He walked in and he said, "Mayor, as much as I'd like to go along with you and the Senator, I can't. I owe too much to John McCormack." I said, "You son of a bitch. After all I've done for you?" "I'm sorry," he said, "John McCormack has done so much for me." Okay, when it came time for the vote, John Kennedy's man won. His man was Pat Lynch, out of Somerville, the former mayor. So John Kennedy took over with his own people in charge of his Democratic state committee.

With the election of '58 coming up he gave me a call again to see him. This time he's not in the bathtub; he's sitting at the fireplace in his apartment. After I sat down, the Senator said, "Here's what I want you to do: I want you to head up the registration drive for my re-election campaign. Teddy's going to be the titular head of the campaign." I was confused at his request and said, "Jack, how can I head this up? John McCormack already has a man." Kennedy replied, "I've already talked to John McCormack, and he is backing off. You have to go to McCormack. He wants to see you. You've got to go see Dever." I had to go and see all these people who were opposed to John Kennedy in the beginning and tell them exactly what I was going to do for the Democratic registration drive for the fall election.

We took an approach that hadn't been done before. We came up with what we thought would be a profile for a Democrat as you looked at people who were on the city and town census lists who were listed as Independents. And we went by what kind of work they did, what their surname was, age, and occupation. So we set up this profile, and we went across the state. Teddy was working in his area, but Teddy helped out when somebody said, "Well, we've got to see somebody important, not just plain little old me, or you, Mr. Costin." Teddy was always there. If we needed him to be there, he was there. That year, 1958, we got the biggest increase in the Democratic ranks during that registration drive because we really went out to the people. We went to the cities and town members to have them do the work that we had set up for them. This was what we did in 1958. The most important reason for the increase in the Democratic ranks in Massachusetts in 1958 was because people believed Jack Kennedy would run for President in 1960.

Then came 1960 and we were already in the middle of the race. Ted Kennedy really, I think, blossomed in this campaign. With his past experience he really was ready for the national campaign. He did everything that was asked of him, crazy things. He was out in Colorado campaigning, and they had a ski-jump race, and they asked him to participate. "Come on, you've got to do this for the campaign." He stepped up and ski jumped. He got a lot of publicity out of the jump. Anything he could do to get the Kennedy name out before the voters, he did. During

the 1960 campaign I was working very closely with him, and I can say he really blossomed into a true campaigner.

We went to the Democratic convention. I was a delegate again in 1960, and went out to Los Angeles, California, where John Kennedy was successful. After the election, John Kennedy gave me a call at city hall and said, “Tom, I want you, as one of the Irish Mafia boys, to come to Washington with us.” So I said, “That’s great. What do you want me to do?” He said, “We don’t know yet. We just want to give you a little heads up that we want to get as many of the loyal people that we can get down there.” I said, “Great.”

So I called my wife and I said, “Sweetheart, pack your bags. We’re going to Washington.” There was a pregnant pause. She said, “Listen, if you think I’m bringing five small youngsters to Washington, well you’re—” boom, boom, boom. A good Irish Catholic family. There are five, right, in the beginning? She said, “If you think I’m going there, well, then you’re crazy. I’ll pack your bags and you can go.”

So, reluctantly, I called Jack back and I said, “Mr. President, I’m sorry. I’m not going to be able to go.” He said, “What do you want?” I said, “I don’t want anything.” Then I thought, two weeks before, in the Lynn paper, there was a big story and a picture of how the local postmaster was going to retire. I said, “Make me postmaster of Lynn. I’ll be happy with that.” He said, “Oh, come on,” and I said, “Make me postmaster of Lynn.” So he said, “Okay, we’ll see what we can do.”

Now, in those days, to become postmaster—dependent on what party was in power—the Congressman of the district had to recommend his candidate for postmaster to the President, and when the President got the name he sent it to the Senate for confirmation. The only problem was that my Congressman wanted to nominate his administrative assistant as the postmaster. So it didn’t look as though anything was going to happen for me.

My wife and I went to Washington for all the inaugural events. We went to the inaugural ball through the snow in our tux and gown. We were walking through the line—just a few couples ahead of another fellow from Lynn whose name was Dan Day, who was also very close to Kennedy. Dan Day was named as the local secretary for John Kennedy. I was asked to be the secretary, but refused. I said, “I can’t do it. I have too much to do. I’ve got my work on the city council, and I’ve got my school. I just can’t do it.” And so Dan Day became the secretary.

When we reached President Kennedy he said to me, “You’re going to be the postmaster of Lynn.” “Mr. President,” I said, “Dan Day is a couple of people behind me. He’s looking for that job too.” He said, “No, we’ve got some other job for him,” but as I was walking down the President said, “Tom, he’s going to be your boss.” Dan Day was named as the Deputy Director of the Postal Service for all of New England, and I became the postmaster of Lynn. But the only way I became postmaster of Lynn, I was the only man to have the President himself send my nomination without the backing of the local Congress to the Senate for confirmation. The Congressman was furious.

Knott: Who was the Congressman?

Costin: Tom Lane. Tom Lane got into some problems a little later on, and he went away to jail for a while, not because of anything I did or John Kennedy did, but something that the Congressman did.

Before I became postmaster, though, there was a mayors' convention in April of 1961, in Washington, and I took members of the city council down to the National Mayors Conference. I set up a meeting to go to the White House with the council members. We were brought into the room where the Cabinet meets, and I was taken into the Oval Office and to meet with President John Kennedy.

While I was talking with him, Kenny O'Donnell came in and said, "Mr. President, you've got to go out and get the keys to your new limousine." It just so happened that I had a photographer with me from Lynn, so the President invited me to go with him. Now, he was on crutches at that time because a couple of weeks before he had been in Canada planting a tree and he hurt his back. So he went out on crutches, and I went with him, and I had my picture taken in front of a limousine that was the first one with a clear, bulletproof top. We had the pictures in the local paper in Lynn. When we came back in, the President went in to talk to the members of the city council.

I became postmaster in June of that year, 1961. On the national level President John Kennedy tried to get his bill for civil rights through the Congress. He couldn't get it passed. Then he issued three executive orders. An executive order, as you know, is an order that the President issues. It becomes law as long as the President is in office or until it's overturned or passed into a law. He issued three executive orders. One was on labor management in the federal service. The second one was that any and all federal installations below the Mason-Dixon Line that still had separate restrooms for colored and white, separate eating facilities for colored and white, separate drinking fountains for colored and white, anything that separated the races, now had to be made into one.

And so the President called the Postmaster General and said he was naming me as the individual who would head up a three-man team to go below the Mason-Dixon Line to make sure that this took place. I had with me the assistant postmaster of Baltimore, Maryland, Warren Bloomberg, and Mike Barone, who was the deputy director of the Philadelphia postal region. We went to post offices where separate facilities existed, and we had to tell the postmaster that this practice had to stop. The only areas that we went to were the areas where they really refused to do it.

The first week in November, we're in Texarkana, Texas, a city where if you stand on the post office steps, looking down the main street, the state of Texas is on your right-hand side, and the state of Arkansas is on your left-hand side. We had to have state troopers walk us from the hotel over to the post office. We had to go to the hardware store and buy a sledgehammer to break down the wall between the white and colored dining area and tell them that now they were going to eat there. What the employees did, instead of eating there, they would punch out on the time clocks to go out and eat outside. They just wouldn't comply with the executive order. If they wanted to go to the bathrooms, they would punch out and go across the street to the gas station.

On Thursday November 7th, we flew into Love Field—Dallas, Texas—and Warren Bloomberg wanted to get a haircut, so Mike Barone and I went and got a cup of coffee. When Warren came back from getting a haircut, he said, “Tom, they don’t like your friend here very much.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Well, I started a conversation with the barber about how nice it was that the President was coming in a couple of weeks, and the barber said, ‘If that son of a bitch comes, he’ll be killed.’” So, okay. I said, “Why don’t we do this: since I have a heavy Boston accent, I’m going to keep quiet, but in conversations, let’s get people to talk to us—not to me but to you guys.”

So, riding in to Dallas, the cab driver used almost the very same language as the barber at the airport about President Kennedy’s visit. That night, we went out to dinner and talked to a waitress, and the waitress said almost the same thing. We documented—we got the names of the people, went back and got the name of the barber, his telephone number. We got the name of the cab driver. We got the name of the waitress, all these people. We got seven people who told us the very same thing. The next morning we’re meeting with the regional director of the postal service, and I said to him, “What the hell is happening here in Dallas?” He said, “You’re talking about the Kennedy visit?” and I said, “Yes.” He said, “Let me show you something.” He pulled open his drawer, pulled out two papers, opened the papers up, and in each paper there was a full-page ad—from a fictitious committee, we found out later—inciting someone to take the President’s life.

This was on a Friday morning. We flew out and I got home Friday night. I called Bill Hartigan. Bill Hartigan was the fellow who had worked for American Airlines, came from Revere, Massachusetts. When I was in the city council, he was on the school committee in Revere. He became one of the Irish Mafia for Kennedy. He handled all the transportation issues with the campaign. He was invited to go to Washington, and he went down and was working with Kenny O’Donnell. They sent him over to the postal service to be Assistant Postmaster General for Transportation, so his family moved down to Washington.

When I got home late Friday night, I called him and told him what I had found. He said, “Tom, I’ll get in touch.” I said, “I’d like to go in and see the President.” He said, “Let me get in touch with Kenny O’Donnell.” He called me back the next day and said, “We’ve got a meeting with Kenny. The President can’t be with us because he’s got to be at—” Monday was the 11th—and he said, “The President’s got to be at the National Cemetery for Armistice Day, but Kenny wants to see you.” So I went down with Bill, and we went and sat with Kenny O’Donnell. I gave Kenny everything we had, the two papers, gave him the names of the people. I said, “Kenny, the President can’t go to Texas. It’s just too volatile. He can’t go.”

He said, “Let me show you something.” He pulled open his drawer. He pulled out a folder, and there were eight different letters. The first letter he showed me that I read was from Adlai Stevenson. He was our Ambassador to the United Nations. He had been in Dallas, Texas, two weeks before I was there. He came back and wrote him a very strong letter that he had been hit on the head by sign-carrying people saying they didn’t want Kennedy there. In the letter he said, “The President should not, under any circumstances, go to Dallas, Texas.” So Kenny said, “Tom, look, here’s what we’re going to do: the first time that Jackie [Kennedy] is going to go on a trip like this, all the emphasis is going to be on Jackie. Jackie is going to do this, and Jackie’s going

to do that. The other thing we're going to do, the first time, we'll take the vehicle that you had your picture taken with, with the bubble top. We're going to use that." I said, "I still don't think he should go."

I went home and that Friday, the 22nd, was the first time I went home for lunch from the postal service. I went home about one o'clock. My wife had a sandwich for me. She went in the other room to listen to *As the World Turns*, and I'm having my sandwich, and I heard just three words. I heard, "Kennedy, Dallas, shot." I'll just never forget. I was so upset because I feel if I had taken the opportunity—

Knott: No. You did everything you could.

Costin: I know, but it's just one of those things that you think.

Knott: Of course.

Costin: So I spent that weekend in Washington with the other Irish guys. We went to the cemetery and all that stuff. Then we ended up at Teddy Kennedy's house. And I think that this was the beginning of Teddy Kennedy becoming Teddy Kennedy.

Knott: He's already a Senator at this point.

Costin: He's already the Senator. But I couldn't believe how, when he came to the house, after all he's been through, the way he could really handle it. He had everything under control. He knew what he wanted to do in talking to the press and talking to the friends and so forth. That was really, I think, one of his finest moments.

After that, instead of being concerned about Washington, I became national president of the postmasters. Just before the '60 election, I get a call from Jack Kennedy asking me if I would go out to Springfield, Massachusetts, to interview Larry O'Brien, who wanted to get involved in the campaign. Larry O'Brien was one of the coordinators for the Governor at the time. Foster Furcolo came from that same area O'Brien did. My brother and I drove out there, and we spent an afternoon with Larry O'Brien. I came back and told John Kennedy, "Yes, I think he would be very helpful with your campaign."

After the assassination, things went on and I became national president of the postmasters after only six years being postmaster. I became national president, and Larry O'Brien was appointed Postmaster General by President Lyndon Johnson. There was some feeling between the people who had been at the White House with Larry. They were upset that he stayed on with Johnson. They had a thousand days with Jack Kennedy, and some of them were looking for jobs.

Anyway, I stayed friendly with Larry O'Brien. That was the time that Larry called me and said, "Tom, we're going to try to do something new with the postal service. We're going to have a survey made to revamp the postal service, and I'd like to get your support of your organization." Just at the time that the report came back about postal reorganization that Johnson and Larry O'Brien were supporting, the election came. And we didn't have a Democrat coming into the

White House; we had [Richard] Nixon. I'm President of the Postmasters under [Winton] Blount, a Republican Postmaster, and a fellow by the name of [Elmer] Ted Klassen became Deputy Postmaster General.

Knott: If we could back up to the '62 campaign.

Costin: Absolutely, let's do that. As I told you before, I was in the position where I had to work with John McCormack, speaker of the House of Representatives, because I'm now the postmaster. I'm not supposed to be involved in politics. So I get a call from the White House asking, "You've got to help Teddy out." I said, "Sure, I'll help Teddy out, but you've got to protect me because I'm going to be going against the Speaker of the House. He's up in Boston." John McCormack's office was right in the main post office, in Post Office Square in Boston. His office was right under the Boston postmaster. He was right under the regional office, and he selected every supervisor who was going to be made in the Boston Post Office. Every appointment went through John McCormack's office, so they had to be a Democrat.

All that being said, I told them to "Send Teddy down to Lynn." So Teddy came down and I told him, "Teddy, look, I'm going to have to parcel you out to some of my old political people here. I can't be going around hand-in-hand. I'll do everything I can." He said, "Well, we're going to send in the storm troopers," and I said, "Who?" He said, "We're sending Steve Smith" —his brother-in-law— "and we're going to send in some other people." I said, "Well, I could work well with Steve." So Steve came in and said, "Tom, line up all the people for me. We're probably going to have to make all kinds of promises." I said, "What do you mean, all kinds of promises?" He said, "Well, I know people will be asking for favors because they're going against John McCormack."

We had two fellows in Lynn who were very strong in the Democratic Party in Lynn—Jack Barry and Tom O'Connor. Jack Barry was on the school committee, and his partner was a schoolteacher. His partner didn't drive, but Jack drove him all around. They both smoked cigars, and they had an insurance agency, and they were both on the Democratic committee, and they were going to be voting for who was going to be the nominee for the Democratic Party at the state convention. So I told Steve, "You've got to see these two guys. They kind of control the Lynn delegation. And there's another fellow. His name is Don Randazzo. I'll get them in my office, and you can come down and you can talk to them." So I brought the three of them in to talk to Steve Smith.

Now Steve Smith is a very bright guy, so he listened as Jack Barry told him, "Well, we're in the insurance business, and if we could get some insurance—" I said, "What kind of insurance do you want?" "Any kind of insurance," Jack said. Steve Smith spoke up, "Well, of course, I've been in charge of our big building out in Chicago. We give out a lot of insurance out there, and elsewhere." That's all he said. He didn't say that Barry and O'Connor were going to get any of it. He just said, "We have all these other things available." So he kind of indicated, you know, telling them what the family controlled.

We have to think, before I go to the Democratic convention—he said, "Who else should I see?" and they said, "Well, we have this fellow. He works for the housing authority, but he's a delegate

too, and he's a painter. He's down painting right now." Steve said, "I'll go and see him." So they took him down, and Steve had to climb the ladder to get to the guy. He couldn't come down from the ladder because his boss was up there watching him paint. They said, "Climb up the ladder, Steve," so Steve climbed up the ladder to talk to him, because he was looking for something too, he wanted a job or something to be over the guy who was looking at him. Steve said, "We'll take a look at whatever you need."

When it came time for the vote in the Democratic Convention in Massachusetts, Barry and O'Connor split their vote. One voted for McCormack and one voted for Kennedy—so they took care of themselves with the two candidates. So I'm still getting calls from the grave. They still want to know, "Where is the insurance from Steve Smith?" I'm saying to myself, *You're all together*. But those were some of the things we had to do.

Of course, you already have notice of the famous speech during the debate where McCormack said, "If your name was Edward Moore, you wouldn't even be here," which was true. But Ted made it, because he worked very hard for the nomination.

Knott: How did he compare to John F. Kennedy? Can you compare and contrast him with his brother?

Costin: Well, he wasn't as fast on his feet as Jack was. Jack was very fast on his feet with comebacks and answering questions. Ted wasn't as cerebral as John was, but he had a very nice way and personality. He won people over, and I think he had what I call the "Kennedy charm." The only one who didn't have the Kennedy charm was Bobby Kennedy. Bobby had a harder surface than either Ted or Jack. I think that Ted listened more to what the people had to say. Jack would listen but wouldn't take it all in because I think he had his mind really made up on a lot of things. But I think Ted was the listener of the family. This is what really impressed me about him during that campaign. He was elected and he's been doing a fantastic job ever since. I think he really came into his own in '68, after Bobby was assassinated.

When that happened, I was national president of the postmasters, and I was in Texas with the Postmaster General at a convention. He came right out of the White House. He was a former minister and worked for the White House, and he always wore black.

Knott: It wasn't [W. Marvin] Watson, was it?

Costin: Watson, yes. The night that Bobby was killed, I was with him, believe it or not, at a postmasters' banquet in Dallas, Texas. We were in Dallas, Texas. We had finished the banquet. I had an extra cup of coffee with the Postmaster General. He went to his room and I went to mine. About an hour later, I get a call from him. He said, "Tom, I want you to know, I just got a call from the President, and he told me that Bobby Kennedy was assassinated." So I made arrangements to come right home, and then went down to New York where I went to the wake and the funeral. Then we went to Washington on the train. I think the speech that Ted Kennedy gave at Bobby's funeral was the best speech I've ever heard him give. And the second best speech was the one he gave at his own mother's funeral. He did a beautiful job both of those times.

After Bobby's death, the Kennedy mantle, really fell on Teddy's shoulders. I say that because up until that point he was always treated by the sisters as the younger brother. After that point, I saw a change in the way he was treated by the girls. He was kind of, I won't say "put aside," but Jack was number one. Actually, Joe [Kennedy Jr.] was really the number one, but then Jack was number one, and Bobby was after Jack was killed. Then it was Bobby because Ted was still young. But he ceased to be the young brother then. He became the head of the family right at that time.

Knott: Yes, sure. So this was noticeable to you?

Costin: Yes, absolutely. I had been around them all. Before, he'd say something and it was like, well, okay. But after that, he said something and I think they really listened. I think the children too. I think his nephews and nieces also, the very same thing at that time. I think they all realized, *This is the family, and he is the head of the family.*

Knott: After Bobby was killed, it had to be tough on him to have this mantle, as you refer to it, put on his shoulders.

Costin: Yes, but you know, he eased into it. In my opinion he did all the right things as far as the family was concerned. There were a lot of things he didn't do right, but as far as the family was concerned, I think he did. He was always there for them. Any time that they needed him, he was there. At first I thought the job was going to be a little too tough for him, but I think he worked right into it.

Knott: What were you picking up in Massachusetts after Bobby was killed and then a year later there's this Chappaquiddick thing? How did that affect his standing here? What did you see? What do you recall from that time?

Costin: I think he lost a lot because of Chappaquiddick. But since Chappaquiddick, the years have gone on and what he's been able to do and the way he has handled his job as a Senator, I think that is not a talking issue right now, as far as the people who vote for him. All you have to do is just take a look at the plurality he has in the elections. I don't know whether it's because you're voting for a Kennedy, but I think most of it is because of what he's done. He has turned into the best communicator and the best arbiter in the United States Senate. If you want something done, that's where you go.

As I told you, I have six children—two boys and four girls. My youngest son, when I was national president the second time, was president of his class at the public school in Lynn. Of my six children, four of them went to Harvard out of the local high school.

Knott: Very nice.

Costin: Kevin [Costin], my youngest, was accepted to Harvard, and he wanted to take a year off. I was national president, and so he came down, and so I got him a job with Ted Kennedy. What Ted Kennedy had him do, he was going to be his personal runner.

He'd come home every night—we had a condominium; the organization had a condominium in Alexandria—and he'd come in and I'd say, "What did you do today?" "Bought sandwiches and did this and that." I said, "You got the sandwiches?" and he said, "Yes, I did that, but dad, I've got to tell you something. I am so impressed with my Senator—" and he was a guy who didn't like politics and all this stuff. He'd tell me stories. He said, "Dad, you know, he gives me a note—" he'll be sitting in the well of the Senate and Kennedy will call him over and give him a note to go to another Senator's office. He said, "Dad, when I go in there, there'll be three or four other runners like me waiting to see that Senator. The minute they see it's Kennedy, I go ahead of them all. I go right in. Instead of handing it to somebody, I have to go in. They want to talk to me. Every time that I had to do this, it happened. He is so well respected."

And the reason he's so well respected, it started with Jack. What Jack did when he was in the Senate—and Bobby also did it—they went out and they hired and got the brightest people who wanted to serve on their staffs. Some of them came down and did it for less money than they could get elsewhere. They just wanted that on their résumé and just to work on some of the staff committees that he was on, like education and Social Security, I mean, these other things that he was working with. If you look at all the bills that go through now, Kennedy somehow is tied into it. Kennedy is there or his staff members are there, and that's why I think that's the name he's making for himself right now.

Knott: Can you give us some examples of, perhaps, acts of generosity or acts of caring on his part, either towards you or your family or people in Lynn, that you might be aware of?

Costin: I'm not going to give you names, but I can tell you of people who have called me looking to get things done. He has never turned us down—and not only me. He has brought so many youngsters in from all over the world to the leading hospitals to take care of them. Any time he goes on a trip, there is someone who's being helped because he brings them back and takes care of them. This is something that he's noted for around here. I can tell you of so many times where people have asked for help. Always.

Knott: And a lot of times this goes unnoticed in terms of media coverage or anything like that.

Costin: He has the best office as far as immigration is concerned and people who have problems.

Knott: We've heard this, yes.

Costin: Emily Winterson just got a big award from the national government because of the work she has done with him with the immigrants. Again, it goes back to, he brings people in who are the brightest. He gets them to work with him, and they do fantastic work.

Knott: Did you get involved in the 1980 campaign when he ran against President [Jimmy] Carter, when he challenged President Carter?

Costin: Oh, yes. We had a house party for him. I didn't; my wife did, my late wife. She was a member of his campaign committee. So we had a house party, and oh, God, what a mess. A mess

in this way: the Secret Service came in and they went through the house four different times. “You have to block off this; you’ve got to block off that; you have to have snipers on the roof.” And it was one of the coldest nights we ever had. Then they came in. He called me himself and said, “Tom, do not allow the press in.” Now, you’ve got a busload of all the—well, you know, you’re looking at the television and you see the pretty faces and the ones who are on television. They’re all out there with their cards. So we sent people out with a pot of coffee for them. He said, “Don’t allow the press in.”

He came and we’re up in our bedroom and he said to me, “Tom, can you have one of these Secret Service guys get me a drink, will you?” So I said to the guy, “He wants a drink,” and he said, “We don’t do that.” I went back to him and he said, “What are you talking about, the Secret Service guys don’t?” And I said, “They don’t do this.” He said, “Those sons of bitches.”

I’ll tell you—just on my own personal thing—my wife came down with cancer, and she really had a hard time. She had cancer for five years, and she was very sick. He called up and he said, “How’s Rosemary [Costin] doing?” I said, “She’s not doing well.” He said, “We’re coming in this morning,” and I said, “You’re what?” He said, “We’re coming in this morning.”

Now, it just so happens that my youngest daughter and my oldest daughter were both AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] swimmers. They were nationally ranked, and they both went to Harvard. They were both captain of the swim team. My youngest daughter came back and was coach of the Harvard swim team for 13 years. She married the coach of the lacrosse team, who later went to Harvard Business School, became the manager of the Harvard Business School. He’s now the A.D. [athletic director] at Harvard.

The reason I tell you this is that when—my other house is up at the Point. I have four acres of land. I have an Olympic-size swimming pool and a seven-room cabana at the pool. All my daughters—we’ve been over here forty years—when they started, they all started to give swimming lessons. My daughter Maura [Costin Scalise], who is the Harvard swim coach, she’s been doing it for the last ten years herself, and she has 500 youngsters a day.

Now, I get the call from Ted. He said, “Tom, we’re going to fly in with a helicopter—” that’s how he used to come up to the house. I said, “Ted, we have 500 kids out in the yard,” and he said, “Just push them back against the fence.” So the helicopter came in, and of course all the kids just wanted to go in and see the helicopter. But he came in and spent almost a whole day, with the helicopter in my yard, just to see my wife.

Knott: That’s great.

Costin: When she died, he came down and gave the eulogy at her funeral.

Knott: Wow. Do you have any idea why—not to switch subjects again—but why he ran in 1980, why he challenged President Carter?

Costin: I think he felt that this was probably going to be the only time he could do this. I think he was upset with Carter. He was very upset with Carter. Carter, I think, was a person who was a

great man as a person. As an administrator, he came into a city like Washington and he brought in all his own people, failing to realize that the running of the federal government is altogether different than the running of a state government. They thought that they were going to be able to remake the government that had been operating almost 300 years.

But he wouldn't listen. Carter would not listen. They tried to tell him this, and he would not listen. He was on his own. He had his own agenda, and he didn't try to work within the system, and I think the system turned against him and they just froze him out. We were hurt—the country was hurt—and I think that's what bothered Ted Kennedy more than anything else, that he just would not listen.

Knott: He stayed with it. The Senator lost some of those early primaries and then picked up some steam near the end. Did you go to the convention that year, the '80?

Costin: No.

Knott: What are you doing at this time in your life, during this period, late '70s into the '80s?

Costin: I'm still postmaster. I became national president a second time in '83, and in '84 and '85 under [Ronald] Reagan.

Knott: How was that, working during the Reagan years?

Costin: That wasn't bad, and the reason it wasn't bad—I just had this. [*shows Knott a picture*] This is me at 21. I turned 21 on August 23. And two weeks later, I'm elected to the city council. The reason why I show you this is because at 21, I'm now talking with guys 29, Jack Kennedy.

I was working with—I didn't tell you about some of the service with his father—I worked with the father. The father would call me and I'd go in. This is when we were doing the registration. He would say, "What are you doing? How are you doing this? Are you following through? This means so much to my son." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, it means a lot to me. The responsibility your son has given me is my responsibility." I'm in the room, in his bedroom, sitting on the edge of the bed, and he's on the other side.

He gets a telephone call from William Taylor, the owner of the *Boston Globe*. He had been trying to get Taylor. I never knew such words existed that I heard the father use on Taylor, because somebody in the editorial staff had put in something that wasn't just what he wanted about his son. He went up one side of him and down the other. He was going to buy that paper, he was going to—but what I liked about the father was that he went to any lengths to make sure that his son was going to become—you know, he was behind every election. He didn't leave anything to chance.

Knott: Any other impressions of the father? Obviously fairly hard driving.

Costin: He was hard driving, but what the father would do, the father would follow up. He wanted to be sure that people did everything that they said they were going to do, like on me. He

just wanted to see me to make sure. He called me a couple weeks after I was supposed to go someplace. “Did you do it? Did it get done?” This is how the campaign was run.

At that time, I was very impressionable, of course, being a young guy. The one thing that really hit me, as far as politics was concerned, I realized that it’s not important to be the guy in front. Really, the people who make the determinations a lot of times are the people who are sitting behind, like the father. After watching the way the thing was working out, it was the father, because of what he had and what he had done in his own life, who was able to make things happen. After I got out of politics, this is what I tried to do myself, stay with Ted.

I was just talking with him this morning before you people came. He’s coming into Lynn on the 25th. So I said to him, “Now, Ted, because you’ve got a tight schedule, you’re going to come in at eight o’clock for breakfast. We’re at the editorial board of the *Daily Item* at nine o’clock, and you’ve got to go to a school that’s been designated by NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] as a NASA school. Then G.E. [General Electric] has a big plaque they want to give you. Let me get the motorcycle cop to meet us at the bridge and take us.” “Tom, don’t you dare put a motorcycle cop in front of me,” he said. “Are you kidding? I don’t want any cop in front of me.” I said, “Why not? We can go from point to point.” “I’ll get from point to point,” he said. “I don’t want any policemen in front of me.” I don’t know why. He probably couldn’t go fast enough, I guess.

He is coming into town. He doesn’t have any opposition, but he’s coming into town anyway just to visit with the people. I said, “Well, how about doing this: we’ve got another thing I’d like to do. We’ve got a state representative who owns the diner, and he’s always at the diner in the morning. Why don’t we go down?” “If we have time, we’ll get a cup of coffee,” he said. “I’m not going to plan on that right now.” So that’s what I’m doing: I’m doing things for him.

Knott: In ’94 he had a bit of a scare in that race with [Mitt] Romney. Were you involved in that as well?

Costin: Oh, yes.

Knott: Was it as tight as it seemed at one point?

Costin: No. Well, I think it was tight, okay? But really, and maybe because I’m a Kennedy person, I can’t see anyone, because of what he’s been doing in the last 40 years, in his position in Washington. I’m involved with the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Lynn right now. We’ve been trying for 40 years to get the extension of the Blue Line into Lynn. Through Ted, we were able to get \$1 million for the last eight years put into the budget to be studying this, and now it’s come down to the crunch time.

So when he comes in, I get the three places he’s going to go. I get in touch with them and I tell them, “Give me talking points. Tell me the things that the people in your organization want to hear.” Then I take that and I give it to Ted and I say, “Ted, look this over now and see—these are the areas you’ve been working in—see if you can work some of these points into your speech.” So when he comes into town, he’ll give them the speech that they want to hear. He certainly will

go before a Chamber of Commerce group. So I've written up a few things for him about the Blue Line that he's already done. Because of all the things he's doing, he can't keep a record of all the materials, so you just have to remind him of the things that he's done, all the things that he's put through.

Knott: Right. Have you noticed a change in him at all since his marriage to Vicki [Reggie Kennedy]?

Costin: I think he's happy. I think she gives him a lot of support, to be a sounding board on—she's very bright, and so I think she is a good sounding board for him. She can tell him what she hears and what she reads and so forth. This is very good for him.

Knott: Was she active in '94, do you recall, in that Romney campaign?

Costin: Yes, she was.

Knott: You mentioned the father earlier. Did you have any interactions with his mother, with Rose [Kennedy]?

Costin: Oh yes, Rose Kennedy, yes.

Knott: Could you talk a little bit about that?

Costin: My wife was his coordinator when Jack first started, and so my wife worked very closely with Rose Kennedy in setting up the teas. That was one of the things that they started and no one else had thought of. They had women at teas, and those were the years when women wore hats, you know, and so the thing was that everybody would try to outdo Rose Kennedy with the hats. I also lined up Rose Kennedy to come to the city of Lynn, after Jack had been assassinated, and she came down to raise money for the cancer group. She gave a beautiful talk at the Memorial Auditorium in Lynn. She would do things like that. She was great.

Knott: How would you explain to somebody who might be reading this transcript 100 years from now, if you could give them a sense of why it is the Kennedys—Edward Kennedy today—has such a hold on the people of Massachusetts? What is that about?

Costin: Well, I think that it probably goes back to maybe the turn of the century. Don't forget, we had the Irish immigrants coming in, and they had signs "No Irish Need Apply" and so forth. They had a very difficult time getting jobs and the like, and I think they had one of their own, Joe Kennedy, to go to Harvard in those early years, and he'd become very successful. To have a large family and then to have one son become a war hero like Joe Kennedy, another war hero like Jack, and to go on to doing what they're doing. Also, the daughters being involved with the handicapped, with the Special Olympics, things like that. Also, I think Rose keeping the family together the way she did, and being so strong in her religion. I think it's just one of those things that caught the imagination of the people, and I think it's been passed on. I think, because of what has happened with the assassinations of both Jack and Bobby, both assassinations, I think that has had something to do with it also.

Knott: Why do you think Senator Ted Kennedy—now in his 44th year in the United States Senate—he certainly doesn't have to do this. He's got other things he could be doing. He could lead a pretty comfortable life if he chose. Why do you think it is that he's chosen to stay with public service for so long, at such a cost in some ways?

Costin: I think it's the Kennedy thing to give back through public service. He's found his niche right now. I think that because of what he's been able to do, to be able to work on both sides of the aisle to get things through. Even though there are a lot of people who damn him and hate him because he's a liberal—I mean, they throw these terms out, and they don't realize exactly what they're saying. If they take a look at what he's been responsible for as far as education is concerned, or healthcare issues, I think he's keeping the doors open on both sides of the aisle to try to move things forward, even if it's just by inches, but he's doing this. I think he feels that he has a role to still play in the Senate of the United States, and I think he'll go down in history as being one of the better ones. If not the *best*!

Knott: You mentioned the people who damn him and hate him, and you hear a lot of that on talk radio. The image that people who, perhaps, listen to talk radio have of him is very different from the person you know. Do you want to add a little bit more to that, perhaps?

Costin: All I can say is, if the people had had the opportunity over the years to see him and the Kennedy family and what they've done to help the people and especially make sure that people don't know about it—they don't go out of their way to publicize all the good that they do, and I think the reason is, I believe, that they believe they're part of what the Good Lord said, that if you're looking for the credit now, then you're not going to get it later on. So I think that's one of the reasons why they do it. Again, I feel very fortunate, having gone through the life that I had, having met Jack Kennedy, having met the Kennedy family.

Knott: Was your father involved in politics, or do you come from a political family?

Costin: Actually, my father was political in this way: my father was one of ten children. He went to the eighth grade in school. He became a fireman for two years, and then he became a police officer. He went from patrolman to be chief of police. He studied hard.

Knott: In Lynn?

Costin: In Lynn. He was one of the smartest men that I've ever known, really. The way that he got me in politics was that he and my mother formed a civic association for our area of the city because the city wasn't paying attention that they needed roadways; they needed sewer lines and so forth. And so he started that just about the time that I was getting interested in politics.

Knott: And you went to Boston College?

Costin: Oh, yes.

Knott: Did that further whet your interest in politics? Anybody at B.C. in the politics department or anything like that?

Costin: Well, don't forget now, when I walked in on my first day, I'm in the city council in Lynn.

Knott: Oh, that's right. I'm sorry.

Costin: Some of my contemporaries up there were vying for positions—president of the class and all this stuff. And, of course, I was the big man. I was up at the campus, at the Tower Building. The lunchroom was right down at the Tower Building. We had to stand up. There were no chairs and no seats or anything. You had to stand up around the—they had benches on the wall. I was the big man on campus for those pols up there, like Bobby Crane, who became State Treasurer. I mean, all these people, [Robert H.] Quinn, he became the Attorney General and wanted to be Governor. He and I served five years together on the University of Massachusetts Board of Trustees.

Knott: I'm asking you, probably, to stick your neck out here, but Senator Kennedy is Catholic; you're Catholic; Boston College is a Catholic institution. The issue of abortion has caused a bit of a split amongst some Catholics who are pro-choice, others who are pro-life. How does he deal with that? This is still a heavily Catholic state. The hierarchy of the church is still very pro-life. How does he deal with that? How does he get past that potentially thorny issue?

Costin: I think he's just pro-choice. What he's doing is the very same thing that Jack Kennedy did when he was confronted during his election for the Presidency when they said, "If he's elected, the Pope will be telling him what to do." He stood right up and said, "No, that's not going to happen," and the same thing is true here. I agree with Ted Kennedy. I'm pro-choice because I have four girls.

Knott: Sure. You consider yourself still a member of the church?

Costin: I still consider myself a member of the church. I think I'm a better member than Cardinal [Bernard] Law. I stood up before 1,000 people in church and demanded that he resign.

Knott: You did?

Costin: Yes.

Knott: Over the scandal involving the priests.

Costin: Over the scandal, yes.

Knott: Has the church recovered from that, the Diocese of Boston?

Costin: No.

Knott: Will it ever?

Costin: It's going to take a long time. I don't think it will ever be recovered. It will never be back to the way it was. Terrible, absolutely terrible.

Knott: I see they just sold the property over in Brighton to Boston College.

Costin: Yes, to Boston College. They're talking about really expanding the B.C. campus. They're talking about walkways over the roadway.

Knott: I saw that story.

Costin: As I tell my kids, I got a better education at B.C. than they got at Harvard.

Knott: You don't have to convince me of that. I'm sure of that.

Costin: Well, to graduate, we had orals. We had to sit for an hour, as an undergraduate, before three Jesuits and two lay teachers where they'd bounce back on theology, epistemology, cosmology. Whoa.

Knott: It was a real liberal-arts education.

Costin: Then I got my master's in education at Salem State.

Knott: And you spent two years in the Marine Corps at some point?

Costin: Two, yes. Seventeen to nineteen, 5-6-5-1-5-0.

Knott: Pardon me?

Costin: That was my dog tag number, 5-6-5-1-5-0.

Knott: Did you go through Parris Island?

Costin: I went through Parris Island.

Knott: You've been through a lot.

Costin: Can I tell you a couple of stories about Tip [Thomas] O'Neill?

Knott: Please. That would be great.

Costin: I had just got elected to the city council in '47. In the council, there were two members: one was Joe Walsh, and one was Walter Cuffe. They were both members of the city council, and they were both state representatives in the same district—two Irish Catholics, two Irish tenors, and two very close friends. So when I started going to the council meetings, after the council

meetings, you'd get invited down to Joe Walsh's house to have a couple of drinks and then play cards with a guy by the name of Tip O'Neill, who was also a state representative who went to B.C. He got out of B.C. in '35 and was at the state legislature with Walsh and Cuffe.

The next year, my grandmother died. She was 85 and an old Irish grandmother who had ten children—five boys and five girls. Three of them are police officers. Big Irish wake, big Irish funeral. Cuffe and Walsh are going to sing three songs at the mass. It was kind of a snowy day in November. We go to the funeral. Cuffe and Walsh sing two songs, and there's a commotion in the choir loft, and no third song. The next day, I happened to see the undertaker and I said, "What happened to Cuffe and Walsh?" "I don't know," he said. "A state trooper came down with the lights blazing. He ran upstairs, grabbed Cuffe and Walsh from the choir loft, and pulled them out." A couple of days later, I found out that Tip O'Neill was running for Speaker of the House. Counted his votes—shy one vote. He said, "Where the hell are Cuffe and Walsh? Singing songs at an Irish funeral? Get them up here." He pulled them from my grandmother's funeral.

In 1984 I'm national president of the postmasters. We had 5,000 postmasters at the Washington Hilton at a legislative rally. Tip O'Neill is my principal speaker, and I've got 18 Congressmen and six Senators who are going to speak after him. So the place is jammed; the place is mobbed. So I introduce Tip O'Neill, and I tell the audience that story about my grandmother's funeral. "The man I want to introduce to you—Tip, you owe the Costins one song." He gets up to the microphone and starts singing "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling."

Knott: That's great.

Costin: So I retired and he sent a letter to my retirement dinner outlining the funeral story.

Oh, I was going to give you these. After John Kennedy was assassinated, I wrote something out. And when they had the unveiling of the stamp, I sent some stamps in this passage that's under here to people. One year to the day that Kennedy was assassinated, I'm flying out of the National Airport in Washington, D.C., and as the plane's coming out, I looked down, I could see the flame on John Kennedy's grave. I see the Washington Monument right down the line, the whole thing all lined up to the Capitol and the lights were just coming on. Beautiful. So I wrote that poem, and you can have this.

Knott: Do people in Massachusetts—or yourself, for instance—bear any ill will against Texans or Dallas?

Costin: Well, I think it was a conspiracy.

Knott: You do?

Costin: Oh, absolutely.

Knott: So you don't think [Lee Harvey] Oswald acted alone?

Costin: No. I don't think Oswald was involved in it at all. Let me tell you why I don't. In 1985 I had a national convention—I was still national president—in Las Vegas. I brought Jack Anderson, the late columnist, out to speak. I spent a little time with Jack Anderson, and he asked me about Kennedy, and I told him the very same story I just told you about the assassination.

When I get through, he says, “Tom, let me tell you my story. During Watergate, I supported Nixon right up almost to the very end, and then when I started reading all the stuff, I turned and went the other way. I was against Nixon, and I said he should be impeached. He should get out and so forth. The minute I did that, strange things happened. I’m a Mormon. I have 13 children.”

Knott: Jack Anderson was a Mormon?

Costin: Yes. He said, “I lived in this beautiful new area in Maryland—it was a cul-de-sac—and my home was down at the very end. Out behind our home was kind of a sloped area, and when I turned against Nixon, cars would come down, face my house all day, and watch my house. So I bought 13 Polaroid cameras for my children, and we got the neighbors involved. When the neighbors saw these cars coming down, they would call the house and whatever kids were there would grab a camera, go out the back doors, up through the back, and come down through the yards and spook the spooks. They would take their picture and take the number of the plates, and then the cars would get out of there.

“After Nixon leaves the White House, after the impeachment, I got a call from Jeb Magruder, and he said, ‘Jack, I’ve got to see you,’ so I had lunch with him. This is what Magruder told me: he said, ‘Jack, I saved your life.’ ‘How did you save my life?’ He said, ‘We had the plumbers’ group meet with the President every Wednesday, and after one meeting, I get a call from one of the members who were there, and they said, “You’d better get [G.] Gordon Liddy because he’s going up to kill Jack Anderson.” So we called the guard, and the guard brought him back to my office. I sat him down and I said, “Gordie, what did you hear at that meeting?” He said, “Look, I’m CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. My Commander in Chief told me to eliminate Jack Anderson.” Magruder said, “No, I was at that meeting. What the President said was, ‘We’d like to eliminate what he’s writing,’ ” and he said, “No, that’s what you got, but my Commander in Chief, who looked right at me, CIA, and told me, ‘Eliminate.’ I’ll take care of it. Don’t worry about it.” He said, “We had to take Gordon Liddy in to the President, and the President had to say to him, ‘I don’t want you to kill Jack Anderson.’ ” They had to deprogram him.

You had the CIA upset with Jack Kennedy because of the Bay of Pigs. You had the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] upset because Bobby Kennedy was over [J. Edgar] Hoover. You had the Vice President one breath away from being the President. You had the people in Texas and Louisiana very upset with Kennedy because he increased the taxes on the oil coming out of Texas and Louisiana and a few other things.

When I retired, they gave me this. This is what Joe Kennedy [II]—Ted Kennedy couldn’t make it, so Joe came down.

Knott: Danversport. That’s great.

Costin: Now, you asked, “What does Ted Kennedy do for you?” This is what Ted Kennedy will do for you.

Knott: *[reading]* President [Martin] Torrijos [Espino] of Panama. Can I read this into the—

Costin: Oh yes, if you want to.

Knott: “Dear President Torrijos—” this is November 10, 2005— “I understand that my good friend, Tom Costin, of Nahant, Massachusetts, will be meeting with you at the end of next week. Every Kennedy running has always counted on Tom’s friendship and support, starting with President Kennedy’s first campaign for Congress in 1946. Tom was a member of the city council in Lynn, Massachusetts, its youngest mayor ever elected. He was appointed postmaster of Lynn in 1961 by President Kennedy, and he has also served with distinction as president of the National Association of Postmasters of the United States. Tom has been a dear and valued friend of the entire Kennedy family ever since. I know he’s looking forward very much to meeting you, and I’m very grateful to you for working it out. With respect and appreciation, Sincerely, Edward M. Kennedy.” That’s great. How did the meeting go?

Costin: It went well. We’re in the process of putting up an oil refinery and a power plant.

Knott: Really? “We” being—?

Costin: Oh, I can’t.

Knott: Okay. Is this the story about Tip singing the song?

Costin: Yes.

Knott: I notice the name Tom McGee here. He was from Lynn, right, the former Speaker?

Costin: Yes, a pain in the ass to me as mayor. He was an alcoholic. He was one of the fellows we brought to Washington. We had to put people, actually, to make sure that when we went to the White House that he wasn’t drunk. But to give this guy credit, he became a state representative. John Thompson was the Speaker of the House, a real dictator. Tommy came in the leadership with him, and Thompson was an alcoholic. And Tom McGee said to himself, I can’t drink if he’s going to be drinking. He gave up drinking cold turkey and hasn’t had any since.

Knott: That’s impressive.

Costin: Yes. But when he was in the city council—

Knott: Well, like I said, you’ve had a tremendous life.

Costin: I have, yes.

Knott: I'm sure you have much more to come. Well, again, thank you so much. Is there anything else? I mean, are we forgetting anything?

Costin: When I had my party, I had just invited my immediate family—my 80th birthday party, which was about three weeks ago.

Knott: My God, you're kidding. You don't look it.

Costin: Thank you very much, sir. Anyway, the only outsiders I invited were Teddy and Vicki. He called me up and said, "Tom, that's the one weekend I'm having all my college friends down to the Cape. We're going sailing," and so forth. I said, "That's okay. I'll save the money on your meal." He said, "Give me your cell phone number," and I said, "You already have it." He said, "It's in the office. Give me your cell phone number." He said, "Have your cell phone on you that night." So that night, I had my cell phone, and about eight o'clock he and Vicki call. So I put him on the speaker, and they were on for about ten minutes.

Knott: That's great.

Costin: But that's the kind of guy he is.

Knott: In this piece you gave us for your event, Joseph P. Kennedy II is pictured. This is from 1993. Is he still a possible gubernatorial candidate here in Massachusetts?

Costin: I would have said yes a couple of years ago, but I don't think so now. He's really—when his brother died.

Knott: Michael.

Costin: Michael, yes. When Michael died, I think that he kind of put that out of his mind. So he's spending all his time with the company he founded, Citizens Energy.

Knott: Citizens Energy?

Costin: Citizens Energy, yes.

Knott: Do you know him fairly well as well?

Costin: Oh, yes.

Knott: Any other Kennedys on the scene in Massachusetts?

Costin: Actually, his two sons now, Matt [Rauch Kennedy] and Joe [Patrick Kennedy III], the twins, they've been up here five times because they're running Ted's campaign.

Knott: Oh, I didn't know that.

Costin: Yes.

Knott: This year?

Costin: Yes, this year.

Knott: Two thousand six?

Costin: Yes.

Knott: That's great. Well, they keep it in the family, don't they? Well, again, thank you very much, Mr. Costin. We appreciate it.

Costin: Tom.

Knott: Tom, thank you.

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